United Nations A/C.3/61/SR.15

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
9 November 2006

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 15th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 13 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Al Bayati ..... (Iraq)

Contents

Agenda item 63: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(b) Follow-up to the special session on children (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

06-56656 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 63: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/61/303)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/61/41 and Corr.1 and Add.1, 207, 275 and Corr.1 and 299)

(b) Follow-up to the special session on children (*continued*) (A/61/270)

1. **Mr. Doek** (Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child) recalled that General Assembly resolution 59/261 had authorized the Committee on the Rights of the Child to meet in two chambers, as a temporary and exceptional measure, in order to clear its backlog of reports. He was pleased to provide an assessment of the progress made over the past two years, while drawing attention to the report on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/61/207) and the biennial report of the Committee (A/61/41), the thematic focus of which was the trends and challenges of the implementation process with respect to children affected by armed conflict.

2. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had worked hard to enhance its methods of work and to dispel concerns raised over its innovative approach. While its burden was considerable, the quality of its work had been maintained and information exchanges between the two chambers had been successful. Feedback from delegations, United Nations agencies and programmes and non-governmental organizations had been positive and supportive and he thanked them for their contributions to the Committee's work and governments for their national follow-up to its recommendations.

3. United Nations conference and document processing services had had to redouble their efforts to meet the increased demands placed on interpreters, press officers, précis-writers and others by the new approach. The document workload had roughly doubled and had been subject to tight deadlines. Occasionally, delegations had had to be content with obtaining documents at the last moment and in a limited number of working languages. That issue would require careful scrutiny, were the Committee to work in two chambers again at some point, as it was imperative that the relevant services should be adequately equipped to handle the increased workload. The Secretariat of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) had also been put under considerable pressure by the additional workload.

4. The Committee on the Rights of the Child was confident that the decision to meet in two chambers had served its main purpose of reducing the backlog of reports significantly. Twenty-four reports were currently pending consideration, and even a larger number would be manageable. Three years previously, the time lag between the submission and the consideration of reports had been two or more years, but that had been reduced to one year or less. He therefore thanked the General Assembly for providing the opportunity to work in two chambers. Since 179 reports were now overdue but could be expected to be submitted in the coming years, a decision might have to be taken in due course on whether to resume working in two chambers.

5. He commended the contribution of the independent expert on violence against children and his team to the study on violence against children and expressed gratitude for the support provided by regional and intergovernmental bodies, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and Member States through their comprehensive responses to the questionnaire on that subject and crucial financial contributions. He fully supported the study's recommendations and called on all Member States to implement them, although he was aware that some States might need more time and support than others to do so. It was equally important for Member States to support action at the United Nations level to combat violence against children by appointing a special representative as a visible advocate for children worldwide.

6. On the issue of treaty-body reform, the Committee on the Rights of the Child would remain committed to the efforts of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to improve current practices with a view to achieving more harmonized working methods and greater effectiveness.

7. **Ms. Pohjankukka** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union was pleased that the reorganization of the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child into two chambers had reduced the backlog of reports, thereby

ensuring more timely consideration of States' actions in the area of the promotion and protection of the rights of children, which was at the heart of the European Union's human rights policy.

8. Referring to paragraph 19 of the report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, she asked what specific measures were needed to ensure positive reinforcement and enhanced cooperation with the United Nations system with regard to the monitoring and reporting of the rights of children affected by armed conflict. She would also like to know how cooperation between the Committee and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict could be further enhanced and whether there was also room for cooperation with regional human rights monitoring mechanisms in that regard.

9. She wished to know whether, as an outcome of its cooperation with the various human rights mechanisms mentioned in paragraph 41 of the report, there were any specific issues that the Committee on the Rights of the Child wished to highlight in its future work. On the matter of overdue reports, she asked what measures the international community could take to ensure timely reporting by States parties.

10. **Mr. Doek** (Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child) drew attention to the Committee's recommendations, which showed that the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict sought to secure an international commitment by States parties to preventing the recruitment and involvement of children in hostilities. He expected to meet with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in order to reinforce their cooperation and also with members of the Security Council with a view to the monitoring of situations of armed conflict in terms of compliance with the Optional Protocol.

11. With regard to specific issues to be highlighted in the Committee's future work, he said that poverty was a major obstacle to the implementation of the Convention and its Optional Protocols. Developing countries faced the predicament of lacking capacity in terms of funding, human resources and expertise and the Committee had therefore decided to devote its next day of discussions to certain aspects of article 4 of the Convention.

12. Turning to the issue of overdue reports, he said that rather than reprimanding States parties that were overdue in their reporting obligations, the Committee sought to help them overcome the obstacles they faced through a number of approaches. Such an outreach strategy was highly productive, as it created a momentum for the implementation of the Convention.

13. **Mr. Tulbure** (Moldova) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which had been adopted so enthusiastically, was the most widely violated international treaty in the world. Every five seconds, a child died of hunger, malnutrition or disease. Millions of children were victims of domestic violence. Children were used as child soldiers, were left to languish in orphanages and detention centres, were forced to work, were sexually assaulted, were abandoned or had no access to education or health care.

14. He wondered how that situation could be tolerated and whether such abuses were not crimes against humanity, as suggested by Prince Albert II of Monaco at the special session of the General Assembly on children. In an ideal world, there would be a special international tribunal for crimes against children. An affordable alternative in the real world would be to establish a special section on children's rights in the International Criminal Court and to encourage regional courts, such as the European Court of Human Rights, to open such sections.

15. The international community was aware that there was still a long way to go to achieve full respect for children's rights, but no more time could be lost. What had been lost was a sense of urgency, expressed in time-bound targets for action. The study on violence against children had generated considerable momentum, through regional consultations involving the participation of children and young people and through a questionnaire which had garnered an unprecedented response from Member States. The study contained not only an analysis of the various aspects of violence against children but also specific recommendations with time-bound targets which should provide a new beginning for international efforts to protect the rights of children.

16. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Rio Group expressed concern about the effects of poverty on the livelihoods of children and urged that increased attention be focused on addressing their practical and material needs. Although the International Labour Organization (ILO) report in document A/61/270 stated that there had been

a decline in child labour worldwide, there still needed to be greater concentration on poverty eradication as a means of ensuring children's well-being particularly since ILO had been unable to provide new estimates on the worst forms of child labour.

17. He noted the failure to achieve gender parity in primary education by the year 2005 and reiterated the critical linkage of education and health care to poverty eradication. Further efforts were needed to achieve universal primary education and increased access to secondary education. Despite persistent inequalities, the Latin American and Caribbean region had had some success in the area of health care, but it was still grappling with HIV/AIDS, particularly among adolescents.

18. The study on violence against children formed a solid basis for dialogue and action aimed at strengthening the regime of child protection measures. Several member States of the Rio Group had established agencies to promote and safeguard the rights and well-being of children and the Group continued to advocate mechanisms that promoted a dialogue with children and young people on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Group was currently considering the draft strategic plan of the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and, given its overarching interest in the demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and illegally armed groups, expressed support for any recommendation that sought to increase funding in that area. Children must be given every opportunity to live free from fear and in peace and security.

19. The States members of the Rio Group reaffirmed their commitment to dialogue, transparency and flexibility in their work with other delegations and hoped that the latest resolution on the rights of the child which focused specifically on children and poverty and the study on violence against children, would be adopted by consensus.

20. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) welcomed the fact that the study on violence against children had been conducted using a multi-faceted, participatory approach, especially by seeking input from children at regional consultations. Its recommendations should become concrete obligations, to be met through specific national legislation and strategies for the eradication of all forms of violence against children and the rehabilitation and social integration of victims, and should be disseminated internationally, at all levels of government and society, for discussion and follow-up.

21. Promoting and protecting the rights of boys and girls was a priority for her Government. Despite the challenges faced in guaranteeing universal enforcement of those rights, some progress had been made. The Colombian Congress had recently enacted an Act on Children and Adolescents which incorporated all the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into national legislation, defined the responsibilities of the family, society and the State for upholding those rights and established a coherent system for drafting, financing and implementing in that regard public policy. The formulation of a 10-year National Plan for Children and Adolescents was in its final stages and a national early-childhood policy was being designed to ensure the psychological, emotional and cognitive development of children in their first years of life.

22. To address violence against children, the new Act on Children and Adolescents explicitly prohibited any kind of physical, emotional or psychological mistreatment or punishment of children in educational and social settings. The Government was complying fully with its commitment not to recruit children under the age of 18 to its armed forces. As part of the process of disarming and demobilizing illegal violent groups, a comprehensive programme had been established for the rehabilitation of children linked to those groups, benefiting 3,000 boys and girls. Preventive measures had also been taken, including the upgrading of education centres, incentives to keep children in school, nutrition and leisure programmes and the strengthening of community life.

23. The recent demobilization of over 40,000 members of violent groups and the measures taken to reduce levels of insecurity, coupled with the Government's social development, economic recovery and poverty reduction policies, had had a positive impact on children's quality of life and exercise of their rights. Much remained to be done, but the United Nations had the capacity to give children's rights the prominence they deserved. Children must be recognized as subjects with full rights that must be protected by families, societies and States.

24. **Ms. Cho** Su-jin (Republic of Korea) said that the importance of raising children in a healthy and loving

environment could not be overemphasized. Significant progress had been made since 2002 in creating a world fit for children, but millions of children still lived in extreme poverty, isolated and overlooked. That was especially evident in countries riven by armed conflict or in failed States where children were denied the most basic care and services. Child abuse, violence and trafficking were hidden but prevalent problems in some least developed countries, and one in every eight newly infected HIV/AIDS patients was a child under the age of 18. In the report in document A/61/270, the Secretary-General noted that inadequate resources and a lack of focus on the need to protect children were among the impediments to achieving the goal of a world fit for children, a goal that converged in many respects with the Millennium Development Goals. As part of its commitment to double overall official development assistance (ODA) by 2009, her government had launched an initiative for Africa's development.

25. Education was indispensable for peace and development, as it helped deter children from joining in armed conflict. Her Government, in the context of activities to achieve education for all, had built schools, installed computer labs and provided nutritional supplements to elementary and middle school students in the occupied Palestinian territories. It had also pledged US$ 10 million to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which would help to prevent and treat those diseases in children.

26. Her country's National Youth Commission was responsible for policymaking on children and young people and had recently convened a special conference on youth, attended by children and youth representatives. More and more non-governmental organizations were also paying closer attention to the rights and welfare of children at home and abroad. Working side by side with civil society, her Government would maintain its strong commitment to global efforts to create a world fit for children.

27. **Ms. Seanedzu** (Ghana) expressed appreciation for the independent expert's groundbreaking study, which unveiled the horrific levels of violence suffered by children around the world and its devastating consequences. Unfortunately, much of that violence took place in settings where children would normally expect love and protection, such as the home, schools, communities and places of care. Girls and young women were particular targets. Children also remained vulnerable to child labour, chronic ill health and preventable diseases, poverty and HIV/AIDS.

28. Another urgent issue was the situation of children affected by armed conflict. Despite recent efforts by the Security Council and the international community, children remained victims of forced recruitment, rape and grave human rights abuses in over 30 conflicts worldwide. Large numbers of them had been maimed, killed, denied access to health care and education, separated from their families and displaced from their homes. Concerted action was needed to enforce international protection standards and send a clear message that the international community would bring perpetrators to justice. Accountability and compliance could best be ensured through the strategic plan outlined by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in document A/61/275. Her delegation also applauded the work done by governments and regional and international bodies to monitor compliance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

29. Her Government was continuing to bring its national legislation into line with regional and international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. Other initiatives to entrench its commitment to children included child-specific development policies and programmes administered by the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs, policy guidelines on orphans and vulnerable children as part of the response to HIV/AIDS, a poverty reduction strategy focusing on vulnerability and exclusion and strenuous efforts in education that had increased school enrolment and attendance for both girls and boys. Improved basic health services for children, particularly in deprived areas of the country, had raised immunization coverage against six childhood diseases and cut the infant mortality rate. A special domestic violence and victims support unit had been created in the Ghana Police Service to provide a safe environment for children and families who were victims of violence, abuse and neglect.

30. Despite those efforts, Ghana, like many other developing countries, had achieved mixed results. Greater numbers of child abuse cases were being reported and recent studies indicated that child sex tourism was on the rise. Lack of resources made it difficult to address child protection issues and she urged donors to ensure that resources were allocated to

activities aimed at eliminating violence against children.

31. **Ms. Rebello** (India) said that the international community must pay more attention to the development of children everywhere, especially in regions where they were most vulnerable. Focus should be placed not just on children's rights, but also on their developmental needs and access to adequate and nutritious food, basic health services and education. Her delegation believed that the General Assembly should also pay greater attention to the plight of children in situations of armed conflict and that the mechanisms to be developed under the Peacebuilding Commission should include rehabilitation and reintegration of all such children. India was home to the largest child population in the world and her Government was fully committed to the goals of "A world fit for children". It had also ratified both Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

32. Elementary education was a fundamental right in her country and the Government was committed to increasing public spending on education. The universal elementary education scheme, which placed special emphasis on girls, had been expanded to cover the entire country. In its commitment to eliminating child labour in all its forms, the Government had passed the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, which imposed a ban on the employment of children under the age of 14 as domestic help or at eateries. However, believing that child labour could not be eliminated by legislation alone, it was also implementing a National Child Labour Project Scheme, the largest such programme worldwide, to withdraw child labour from economic activities. The 2005 National Policy of Action for Children extended all rights to all children up to the age of 18, while the Child Rights Act provided for speedy trials in the case of offences against children or violations of children's rights.

33. **Ms. Setyawati Firman** (Indonesia) said that while the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly (A/61/270) noted the growing trend towards mainstreaming the goals of the special session into national plans of action, that trend was not reflected in meaningful progress on the ground. During the mid-decade review process in 2007, her delegation expected to get a better picture of the progress made and the challenges that remained. One such challenge was children and armed conflict and her delegation agreed that engaging Member States systematically was essential to ensure the effective implementation of standards and norms for the protection of children in such situations.

34. In Indonesia, "A world fit for children" was being implemented under the national human rights framework, through child-related goals and targets incorporated in the National Action Plan on Human Rights. The National Programme for Indonesian Children 2015 addressed four major areas that also formed part of the Millennium Development Goals.

35. To provide quality education under the nine-year compulsory school programme, her Government had been working with national and international stakeholders in renovating school buildings, developing better curricula, building teacher capacity and strengthening school management. Having learned much from the 2004 tsunami, the Government was undertaking a "back to school" programme to provide education for children affected by the May earthquake in Yogyakarta. Child-friendly schools, with clean running water, separate toilets for boys and girls and access for disabled children, had been introduced.

36. In the area of promoting healthy lives, the Government, with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), had conducted a national polio immunization programme in a concerted effort to help the country regain its polio-free status. Indonesia's President had also ordered the free provision of birth registration for every child as a fundamental human right essential to protecting the child's right to an identity. As a way of guaranteeing the protection of children against abuse, exploitation and violence, the Government had been promoting the establishment of child protection commissions at provincial and district level. Steps were also being taken to formulate a national action plan to combat violence against children.

37. Concerning the fourth goal, care for children affected by HIV/AIDS, greater attention to antiretroviral treatment must be balanced with prevention measures, especially those related to mother-to-child transmission of HIV. The need to protect children orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS was equally important.

38. **Ms. Pi** (Uruguay) reiterated her delegation's profound concern at the worldwide persistence of violence, exploitation and abuse of children, in their homes, schools, communities, detention centres and the workplace. Her Government had undertaken to protect the rights of all children and adolescents under its jurisdiction, regardless of ethnic, national or social origin, gender, language, religion, economic position or physical or mental disability. It had a particular responsibility to protect them from all forms of violence, discrimination and abuse, including parents' failure to fulfil their basic duties towards them.

39. Her delegation appreciated the participatory approach taken to compiling the study on violence against children, involving governments, civil society, children and youth themselves, as well as United Nations agencies and regional organizations. It joined the independent expert in calling on all Member States to take urgent action to fulfil their human rights commitments and to protect children against all forms of violence. It believed that the study provided an excellent opportunity for generating real and positive change in the lives of all boys and girls.

40. Poverty too was a form of violence. In her country, poverty tended to affect the youngest members of the population most severely. Street children and child workers were the visible faces of that poverty, which demanded not only an immediate but also a lasting response. It was essential to support families living in poverty by ensuring proper nutrition and health care in pregnancy and the first years of life, so that children could reach their full intellectual and physical potential. Efforts must also be made to universalize early childhood education. Support for the current generation of adolescents and young adults living in poverty would also have an impact on children born in the coming decade. The international community must support global poverty eradication efforts in order to achieve the goal of a world fit for children. Investment in children and respect for their rights were among the most effective ways of eradicating poverty.

41. **Mr. Hannesson** (Iceland) commended the independent expert's study on violence against children as a significant contribution to efforts to further the rights of children all over the world. The active involvement of governments, international organizations, civil society, non-governmental organizations and children themselves was a major achievement. His Government had participated in activities organized by the Council of Europe to develop strategies for protecting children against violence and raise awareness of the issue. Recognizing the importance of child-friendly judicial procedures to protect children from trauma and re-victimization, it had established a multi-agency child-friendly setting — the "Children's House" — where child protection services, the medical professions, law enforcement, prosecution and even court judges worked together under one roof. He underlined the important contribution of UNICEF to safeguarding the rights and interests of children, which had prompted his Government to increase it contribution to UNICEF substantially.

42. **Ms. Bernardi** (San Marino) expressed particular concern about the question of children in armed conflict and urged implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), which established a mandate for the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. That mechanism should act on six grave abuses: killing or maiming of children; recruitment or use of child soldiers; attacks against schools or hospitals; rape or other grave sexual violence against children; abduction of children; and denial of humanitarian access for children. The United Nations should monitor all situations, even in countries that were not on the Security Council's agenda.

43. Her delegation believed that national governments, the relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and civil society should all cooperate in protecting and rehabilitating children in dire situations. Particular attention must be given to the fact that many cases of abuse and violations against children during armed conflicts were perpetrated by United Nations peacekeeping troops. Her Government supported the implementation of the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse of children and the full compliance of all actors with the United Nations code of conduct. Illicit subregional and cross-border activities harmful to children and other violations and abuses committed against children in situations of armed conflict must be universally condemned.

44. **Mr. Chernenko** (Russian Federation) said that despite the international community's child protection efforts, children remained the most vulnerable population group: they were the first to suffer from hunger and disease, poverty and exploitation, armed

conflict and terrorism. In pursuing the goal of sparing children the suffering and horrors they currently faced, governments should follow the basic principles set out in international instruments. It was troubling to see that some delegations were attempting to politicize the issue of children by making false insinuations in pursuit of political ambitions. In cooperation with UNHCHR, his Government was planning to hold a seminar on how to implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child more effectively.

45. Pursuant to the outcome document of the special session on children, his Government had implemented a federal programme, "Children of Russia", for 2003-2006; a similar programme was planned for 2007-2010. Improving the situation of children was a key part of Russian social policy. In an effort to raise the birth rate, the Government had proposed doubling the monthly social allowance for the first child and quadrupling it for the second child. Upon the birth of the second child, mothers would receive a lump-sum payment that they could use for the child's education or health care or for housing. Incentives were also planned to increase the number of foster homes for orphaned children. A new government committee had been created to coordinate child protection efforts.

46. During its presidency of the Group of Eight, his Government had organized an unprecedented event: a "Junior Eight" at which delegations of young people had met for two weeks to discuss global issues and report on their conclusions to participants at the Group of Eight Summit. In September 2006, the Government had organized an international seminar on developing institutional mechanisms to improve the situation of children, including disabled and orphaned children. The problems of children were a priority for his Government, which advocated increased international efforts to safeguard children's rights to dignity, development and protection.

47. **Ms.** Ang Siok **Hui** (Singapore) said that, in its commitment to improving the lives of children, her Government continued to focus on key areas such as health, education, legislation and social services and had established a robust legislative framework to protect children's fundamental rights. The Compulsory Education Act ensured the right to six years of basic education. In the area of child protection, national standards for the protection of children had been established and a family violence networking system ensured a coordinated approach towards detecting child abuse and providing protection. Legislation had also been amended to expand the definition of child abuse to include emotional and psychological abuse.

48. Child sex tourism was particularly abhorrent and could not be tackled only at the national level. Her Government had therefore joined other South-East Asia and the Pacific governments in efforts to halt such exploitation. It was also involved in a regional campaign against child sex tourism that combated sexual abuse of children by foreign travellers. It continued to support regional and international efforts to protect children and provide them with opportunities to learn, play, grow and reach their full potential.

49. **Mr. Alakhder** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that although most States had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, enormous harm continued to be caused to children by armed conflict, sexual violence, displacement, police brutality and child labour. The international community needed to make States answerable for implementing the international conventions that they had signed, hold violators accountable and impose sanctions. The phenomenon of street children who were exploited by gangs and led into a life of delinquency was on the increase and greater efforts were needed to address it. His delegation was deeply concerned about the suffering of Palestinian children under Israeli occupation, who were prevented from attending school by Israeli roadblocks and were deprived of their rights and identity. Lebanese children too had suffered from an unjust war, the brutality of which was exemplified by the second Qana massacre, and they continued to be killed by internationally banned cluster bombs. His delegation called on the United Nations to cooperate with the African Union in addressing the problems caused to African children by discrimination, HIV/AIDS, misguided traditional practices and armed conflict. His Government, which had ratified all the international instruments related to the rights of the child, had set up health-care and vaccination centres all over Libya, believing that the health and welfare of its children was the best investment that a society could make.

50. **Ms. Assoumou** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that poverty, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, discrimination, armed conflict, child labour and sexual exploitation had become children's daily lot. The situation of children in armed conflict and child soldiers was particular cause

for concern and her Government therefore welcomed the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and was committed to ratifying it once the political situation in the country permitted. The ceasefire agreement signed in Côte d'Ivoire took account of the need to protect children and the process of disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating some 4,000 child soldiers had begun. Under that process, more than 300 demobilized children had received appropriate care for emotional and psycho-social problems, prior to their reintegration into society.

51. Child labour was another aspect of violence against children. In Côte d'Ivoire, children were the victims of trafficking and exploitation in mines and cocoa plantations. The Government had established an institutional framework and legal instruments to combat that phenomenon, including a Ministry for Family, Women and Children and a Ministry of Human Rights. It had ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182 and had signed a multilateral cooperation agreement with nine other African countries to combat child labour and trafficking.

52. **Mr. Al-Moqhim** (Saudi Arabia) said that his Government's concern for the rights of children stemmed from both the country's Basic Law and the Islamic sharia, which regarded human rights as a divine blessing. Saudi Arabian law began protecting children while they were still in the womb, by prohibiting abortion except for health reasons, and provided care throughout pregnancy and after birth. The country's labour laws provided for maternity leave, the right of mothers to return to their jobs after giving birth, and breastfeeding breaks. A child's right of inheritance went into effect prior to birth. Free education was provided to all children, including those with special needs, and governmental and civil institutions nurtured children's education, health and recreation. The Government encouraged foster families to care for orphaned children, and provided children's centres equipped with educational and recreational materials. Assistance was available for families with disabled children.

53. His Government had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Covenant of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on the Rights of the Child. It had approved the 10-year programme of action adopted at the third extraordinary session of OIC, held in Mecca, which included many aspects relevant to children. It urged OIC member States to accede to the OIC Covenant and States Members of the United Nations to accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto.

54. His country's concern for children did not stop at its borders. King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, while still Crown Prince, had joined with the Prime Minister of Malaysia in a 15-year US$ 150 million project for child victims of the Asian tsunami. His delegation was distressed that Israel, not content with causing suffering to the Palestinian children under its occupation, was also causing suffering to children in Lebanon as a result of its vicious aggression against that country.

55. **Mr. Suwal** (Nepal) reiterated his Government's commitment to its implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the national, regional and international levels. Special attention must be paid to issues specific to children, but those issues could not be divorced from larger development challenges. Achieving the goals of halving poverty and providing universal access to primary education by 2015 was a daunting challenge, because despite having good policies and plans, least developed countries such as Nepal needed additional international financial and technical assistance to achieve the goals of their national action plans for children.

56. As one of the most vulnerable groups in society, Nepalese children had suffered most from the violence and conflict of recent years. Children in remote rural areas and from marginalized communities were also at risk, making social inclusion a high priority. Universal primary education and social services for children were being promoted through programmes with village development committees and municipalities, in cooperation with development partners and non-governmental organizations. The Government had also adopted legislation such as the Children Act, safeguarding the rights of children, and the Child Labour (Prohibition and Control) Act, prohibiting the employment of children under age 16.

57. His Government had taken strict measures to prevent child abduction, recruitment of child soldiers and detention of children under any circumstances. It was fully committed to solving the Maoist problem through dialogue and peaceful means. Sustained peace and stability in the country would improve the situation

of all children. As a democratic Nepal emerged from conflict and violence, it needed additional financial and technical assistance to improve the quality of its education and health services and other programmes for the development of children.

58. **Mr.** Win **Mra** (Myanmar) said that implementation of the four major goals of the Plan of Action adopted at the special session on children would greatly assist efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. His Government had drawn up a national plan of action and enacted legislation to help create a world fit for children. The under-5 mortality rate in his country, a critical indicator of the well-being of children, had improved noticeably, and progress had been made in the universal salt iodization programme. Yearly measles immunization programmes had been conducted since 1987 and the goal of total immunization coverage should be reached in 2006. Combating malaria was also a national priority, with the goal of halving morbidity by 2010. Access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation was an indispensable component of primary health care and the Millennium Development Goal of giving 66 per cent of the population access by 2015 had been met and exceeded in 2000. Considerable progress had been made in providing quality education, with equal access for boys and girls, and the Government was on target to achieve the goal of universal primary education by 2015.

59. Peace and stability prevailed in Myanmar, thanks to the return of 17 out of the 18 insurgent groups to the legal fold, and the country was no longer in a situation of armed conflict. The Government had taken firm measures to prevent the recruitment of children under 18 into the army and had made arrangements for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF to visit military recruitment centres in Yangon and Mandalay to verify that recruitment was in compliance with the law. It would continue to cooperate with those agencies.

60. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) said that over the past summer, Lebanon and its children had once again been victims of Israeli aggression, with over 1,100 civilians killed and over 4,000 injured. The education sector had suffered around $70 million in damage: close to 50 schools had been totally destroyed, while 300 others needed repairs. Water systems had been totally or partially destroyed, leaving at least 1.7 million people, 40 per cent of them children, with interrupted supplies. The biggest risk to the lives of children in south Lebanon, however, was unexploded ordnance, which would take months, if not years, to clear. Since the cessation of hostilities, 124 people had been killed or wounded by unexploded bombs, many of which were designed to look like toys or chocolate bars.

61. After describing an incident that had taken place on 15 July 2006, in which Israeli troops had deliberately targeted a Lebanese family as it fled the fighting, killing several children, he said that his Government condemned the killing of children and of all civilians and looked forward to the day when children would be able to learn and play together, in line with the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.